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Selected Poems. John Keats.



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Contents

About the author

John Keats (October 31, 1795 - February 23, 1821) was one of the principal poets in the English Romantic movement. During his short life, his work was the subject of constant politically motivated critical attack, and it was not until much later that the significance of the cultural change which his work both presaged and helped to form was fully appreciated.



Born on Hallowe'en day, 1795 near London to a stable-keeper and his wife, the first seven years of Keats's life were happy. The beginnings of his troubles occurred in 1803, when his father died from a fractured skull after falling from his horse. His mother remarried soon afterwards, but as quickly left the new husband and moved herself and her children to live with Keats' grandmother. There, Keats attended a school that first instilled in him a love of literature. In 1810, however, his mother died of tuberculosis, leaving him and his siblings in the custody of their grandmother.

The grandmother appointed two guardians to take care of her new charges, and these guardians removed Keats from his old school to become a surgeon's apprentice. This continued until 1814, when, after a fight with his master, he left his apprenticeship and became a student at a local hospital. During that year, he devoted more and more of his time to the study of literature.

His introduction to the work of Edmund Spenser, particularly *The Faerie Queene*, was to prove a turning point in Keats' development as a poet; it was to inspire Keats to write his first poem, *Imitation of Spenser*.

He befriended Leigh Hunt, a writer who helped him publish his first poem in 1816. In 1817, Keats published his first volume of poetry entitled *Simply Poems*. Keats' *Poems* was not well received, largely due to his connection with the controversial Hunt.

Keats moved to the Isle of Wight in the summer of 1817.

Working on his writing, he soon found his brother, Tom Keats, entrusted to his care. Tom was, like their mother, suffering from tuberculosis. Finishing his epic poem "*Endymion*," Keats left to hike in Scotland and Ireland with his friend Charles Brown. However, he too began to show signs of tuberculosis infection on that trip, and returned prematurely. When he did, he found that Tom's condition had deteriorated, and that *Endymion* had, as had *Poems* before it, been the target of much abuse from the critics.

In 1818, Tom Keats died from his infection, and John Keats moved again, to live in Brown's house in London. There he met Fanny Brawne, who with her mother had been staying at Brown's house, and he quickly fell in love. The later (posthumous) publication of their correspondence was to scandalise Victorian society.

Keats produced some of his finest poetry during the spring and summer of 1819: *Ode to Psyche*, *Ode on a Grecian Urn* and *Ode to a Nightingale*.

This relationship was cut short, however, when by 1820 Keats began to show worse signs of the disease that had plagued his family. On the suggestion of his doctors, he left the cold airs of London behind and moved to Italy with his friend Joseph Severn invited by Shelley. For one year, this seemed to help his condition, but his health finally deteriorated. He died on February 23, 1821 and was interred in the Protestant Cemetery, Rome. His last request was followed, and thus he was buried under a tombstone reading "Here lies one whose name was writ in water."



Contents

A Thing of Beauty is a Joy Forever

from Book 1 of Endymion

Addressed to Haydon

After Reading Dante's Episode of Paolo and Francesca, A Dream

Answer to a Sonnet by J.H.Reynolds, Ending

Epistle to my Brother George

Happy is England! I Could Be Content

His Last Sonnet

How Many Bards Gild the Lapses of Time!

If by Dull Rhymes Our English Must be Chained

La Belle Dame Sans Merci

Lines on the Mermaid Tavern

O Solitude! If I Must With Thee Dwell

Ode on a Grecian Urn

Ode on Melancholy

Ode to a Nightingale

Ode to Autumn

Ode to Psyche

On Fame

On First Looking into Chapman's Homer

On Leaving Some Friends at an Early Hour

On Seeing the Elgin Marbles for the First Time

On the Sea

The Day is Gone, and all its Sweets are Gone

The Human Seasons

To

To a Friend Who Sent Me Some Roses

To a Young Lady Who Sent Me a Laurel Crown

To Ailsa Rock

To Autumn

To Fanny

To G.A.W.

To Haydon

To Homer

To John Hamilton Reynolds

To My Brother George

To My Brothers

To One Who Has Been Long in City Pent

To Sleep

To the Nile

When I Have Fears That I May Cease to Be

Why Did I Laugh Tonight? No Voice Will Tell

Written Before Re-Reading King Lear

Written on a Blank Space

Written on a Summer Evening

Written on the Day that Mr Leigh Hunt Left Prison

Click on a poem in the list to go to the first line of that poem.

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Selected Poems.

A Thing of Beauty is a Joy Forever *from Book 1 of Endymion*

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.
Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing
A flowery band to bind us to the earth,
Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways
Made for our searching: yes, in spite of all,
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon,
Trees old, and young, sprouting a shady boon
For simple sheep; and such are daffodils
With the green world they live in; and clear rills
That for themselves a cooling covert make
'Gainst the hot season; the mid-forest brake,
Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms:
And such too is the grandeur of the dooms
We have imagined for the mighty dead;
All lovely tales that we have heard or read:

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An endless fountain of immortal drink,
Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

Nor do we merely feel these essences
For one short hour; no, even as the trees
That whisper round a temple become soon
Dear as the temple's self, so does the moon,
The passion poesy, glories infinite,
Haunt us till they become a cheering light
Unto our souls, and bound to us so fast
That, whether there be shine or gloom o'ercast,
They always must be with us, or we die.

Therefore, 'tis with full happiness that I
Will trace the story of Endymion.
The very music of the name has gone
Into my being, and each pleasant scene
Is growing fresh before me as the green
Of our own valleys: so I will begin
Now while I cannot hear the city's din;
Now while the early budders are just new,
And run in mazes of the youngest hue
About old forests; while the willow trails
Its delicate amber; and the dairy pails
Bring home increase of milk. And, as the year
Grows lush in juicy stalks, I'll smoothly steer



My little boat, for many quiet hours,
With streams that deepen freshly into bowers.
Many and many a verse I hope to write,
Before the daisies, vermeil rimmed and white,
Hide in deep herbage; and ere yet the bees
Hum about globes of clover and sweet peas,
I must be near the middle of my story.
O may no wintry season, bare and hoary,
See it half finished: but let Autumn bold,
With universal tinge of sober gold,
Be all about me when I make an end!
And now at once, adventuresome, I send
My herald thought into a wilderness:
There let its trumpet blow, and quickly dress
My uncertain path with green, that I may speed
Easily onward, thorough flowers and weed.

Addressed to Haydon

High-mindedness, a jealousy for good,
 A loving-kindness for the great man's fame,
 Dwells here and there with people of no name,
 In noisome alley, and in pathless wood:
 And where we think the truth least understood,
 Oft may be found a "singleness of aim,"
 That ought to frighten into hooded shame
 A money-mongering, pitiable brood.
 How glorious this affection for the cause
 Of steadfast genius, toiling gallantly!
 What when a stout unbending champion awes
 Envy and malice to their native sty?
 Unnumbered souls breathe out a still applause,
 Proud to behold him in his country's eye.

*After Reading Dante's Episode
of Paolo and Francesca, A Dream*

As Hermes once took to his feathers light,
 When lulled Argus, baffled, swooned and slept,
 So on a Delphic reed, my idle spright
 So played, so charmed, so conquered, so bereft
 The dragon-world of all its hundred eyes;
 And seeing it asleep, so fled away,
 Not to pure Ida with its snow-cold skies,
 Nor unto Tempe, where Jove grieved a day;
 But to that second circle of sad Hell,
 Where in the gust, the whirlwind, and the flaw
 Of rain and hail-stones, lovers need not tell
 Their sorrows. Pale were the sweet lips I saw,
 Pale were the lips I kissed, and fair the form
 I floated with, about that melancholy storm.

*Answer to a Sonnet by J.H.Reynolds,
Ending*

“Dark eyes are dearer far
Than those that mock the hyacinthine bell.”

Blue! 'Tis the life of heaven, -the domain
Of Cynthia, -the wide palace of the sun, -
The tent of Hesperus, and all his train, -
The bosomer of clouds, gold, gray, and dun.
Blue! 'Tis the life of waters: -Ocean
And all its vassal streams, pools numberless,
May rage, and foam, and fret, but never can
Subside, if not to dark-blue nativeness.
Blue! gentle cousin of the forest-green,
Married to green in all the sweetest flowers -
Forget-me-not, -the blue-bell, -and, that queen
Of secrecy, the violet: what strange powers
Hast thou, as a mere shadow! But how great,
When in an Eye thou art alive with fate!



Epistle to my Brother George

Full many a dreary hour have I past,
My brain bewildered, and my mind o'ercast
With heaviness; in seasons when I've thought
No sphere's strains by me could e'er be caught
From the blue dome, though I to dimness gaze
On the far depth where sheeted lightning plays;
Or, on the wavy grass outstretched supinely,
Pry 'mong the stars, to strive to think divinely:
That I should never hear Apollo's song,
Though feathery clouds were floating all along
The purple west, and, two bright streaks between,
The golden lyre itself were dimly seen:
That the still murmur of the honey bee
Would never teach a rural song to me:
That the bright glance from beauty's eyelids slanting
Would never make a lay of mine enchanting,
Or warm my breast with ardour to unfold
Some tale of love and arms in time of old.

But there are times, when those that love the bay,
Fly from all sorrowing far, far away;
A sudden glow comes on them, nought they see
In water, earth, or air, but poesy.
It has been said, dear George, and true I hold it,

(For knightly Spenser to Libertas told it,
 That when a Poet is in such a trance,
 In air her sees white coursers paw, and prance,
 Bestriden of gay knights, in gay apparel,
 Who at each other tilt in playful quarrel,
 And what we, ignorantly, sheet-lightning call,
 Is the swift opening of their wide portal,
 When the bright warder blows his trumpet clear,
 Whose tones reach nought on earth but Poet's ear.
 When these enchanted portals open wide,
 And through the light the horsemen swiftly glide,
 The Poet's eye can reach those golden halls,
 And view the glory of their festivals:
 Their ladies fair, that in the distance seem
 Fit for the silv'ring of a seraph's dream;
 Their rich brimmed goblets, that incessant run
 Like the bright spots that move about the sun;
 And, when upheld, the wine from each bright jar
 Pours with the lustre of a falling star.
 Yet further off, are dimly seen their bowers,
 Of which, no mortal eye can reach the flowers;
 And 'tis right just, for well Apollo knows
 'Twould make the Poet quarrel with the rose.
 All that's revealed from that far seat of blisses
 Is the clear fountains' interchanging kisses,
 As gracefully descending, light and thin,



Like silver streaks across a dolphin's fin,
 When he upswimmeth from the coral caves,
 And sports with half his tail above the waves.

These wonders strange he sees, and many more,
 Whose head is pregnant with poetic lore.
 Should he upon an evening ramble fare
 With forehead to the soothing breezes bare,
 Would he nought see but the dark, silent blue
 With all its diamonds trembling through and through?
 Or the coy moon, when in the waviness
 Of whitest clouds she does her beauty dress,
 And staidly paces higher up, and higher,
 Like a sweet nun in holy-day attire?
 Ah, yes! much more would start into his sight -
 The revelries and mysteries of night:
 And should I ever see them, I will tell you
 Such tales as needs must with amazement spell you.

These are the living pleasures of the bard:
 But richer far posterity's reward.
 What does he murmur with his latest breath,
 While his proud eye looks though the film of death?
 "What though I leave this dull and earthly mould,
 Yet shall my spirit lofty converse hold
 With after times. -The patriot shall feel

My stern alarum, and unsheath his steel;
 Or, in the senate thunder out my numbers
 To startle princes from their easy slumbers.
 The sage will mingle with each moral theme
 My happy thoughts sententious; he will teem
 With lofty periods when my verses fire him,
 And then I'll stoop from heaven to inspire him.
 Lays have I left of such a dear delight
 That maids will sing them on their bridal night.
 Gay villagers, upon a morn of May,
 When they have tired their gentle limbs with play
 And formed a snowy circle on the grass,
 And placed in midst of all that lovely lass
 Who chosen is their queen, -with her fine head
 Crowned with flowers purple, white, and red:
 For there the lily, and the musk-rose, sighing,
 Are emblems true of hapless lovers dying:
 Between her breasts, that never yet felt trouble,
 A bunch of violets full blown, and double,
 Serenely sleep: -she from a casket takes
 A little book, -and then a joy awakes
 About each youthful heart, -with stifled cries,
 And rubbing of white hands, and sparkling eyes:
 For she's to read a tale of hopes, and fears;
 One that I fostered in my youthful years:
 The pearls, that on each glist'ning circlet sleep,



Must ever and anon with silent creep,
 Lured by the innocent dimples. To sweet rest
 Shall the dear babe, upon its mother's breast,
 Be lulled with songs of mine. Fair world, adieu!
 Thy dales, and hills, are fading from my view:
 Swiftly I mount, upon wide spreading pinions,
 Far from the narrow bound of thy dominions.
 Full joy I feel, while thus I cleave the air,
 That my soft verse will charm thy daughters fair,
 And warm thy sons!" Ah, my dear friend and brother,
 Could I, at once, my mad ambition smother,
 For tasting joys like these, sure I should be
 Happier, and dearer to society.
 At times, 'tis true, I've felt relief from pain
 When some bright thought has darted through my brain:
 Through all that day I've felt a greater pleasure
 Than if I'd brought to light a hidden treasure.
 As to my sonnets, though none else should heed them,
 I feel delighted, still, that you should read them.
 Of late, too, I have had much calm enjoyment,
 Stretched on the grass at my best loved employment
 Of scribbling lines for you. These things I thought
 While, in my face, the freshest breeze I caught.
 E'en now I'm pillowed on a bed of flowers
 That crowns a lofty clift, which proudly towers
 Above the ocean-waves, The stalks, and blades,

Chequer my tablet with their quivering shades.
 On one side is a field of drooping oats,
 Through which the poppies show their scarlet coats;
 So pert and useless, that they bring to mind
 The scarlet coats that pester human-kind.
 And on the other side, outspread, is seen
 Ocean's blue mantle streaked with purple, and green.
 Now 'tis I see a canvassed ship, and now
 Mark the bright silver curling round her prow.
 I see the lark down-dropping to his nest,
 And the broad winged sea-gull never at rest;
 For when no more he spreads his feathers free,
 His breast is dancing on the restless sea.
 Now I direct my eyes into the west,
 Which at this moment is in sunbeams drest:
 Why westward turn? 'Twas but to say adieu!
 'Twas but to kiss my hand, dear George, to you!

August, 1816.



Happy is England! I Could Be Content

Happy is England! I could be content
 To see no other verdure than its own;
 To feel no other breezes than are blown
 Through its tall woods with high romances blent;
 Yet do I sometimes feel a languishment
 For skies Italian, and an inward groan
 To sit upon an Alp as on a throne,
 And half forget what world or worldling meant.
 Happy is England, sweet her artless daughters;
 Enough their simple loveliness for me,
 Enough their whitest arms in silence clinging;
 Yet do I often warmly burn to see
 Beauties of deeper glance, and hear their singing,
 And float with them about the summer waters.

His Last Sonnet

Bright star, would I were steadfast as thou art! -
 Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night,
 And watching, with eternal lids apart,
 Like Nature's patient sleepless Eremite,
 The moving waters at their priestlike task
 Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
 Or gazing on the new soft fallen mask
 Of snow upon the mountains and the moors -
 No -yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,
 Pillowed upon my fair love's ripening breast,
 To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,
 Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,
 Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
 And so live ever -or else swoon to death.

*How Many Bards Gild the Lapses of Time!*

How many bards gild the lapses of time!
 A few of them have ever been the food
 Of my delighted fancy, -I could brood
 Over their beauties, earthly, or sublime:
 And often, when I sit me down to rhyme,
 These will in throngs before my mind intrude:
 But no confusion, no disturbance rude
 Do they occasion; 'tis a pleasing chime.
 So the unnumbered sounds that evening store;
 The songs of birds -the whispering of the leaves -
 The voice of waters -the great bell that heaves
 With solemn sound, -and thousand others more,
 That distance of recognizance bereaves,
 Makes pleasing music, and not wild uproar.

If by Dull Rhymes Our English Must be Chained

If by dull rhymes our English must be chained,
 And, like Andromeda, the Sonnet sweet
 Fettered, in spite of pained loveliness;
 Let us find out, if we must be constrained,
 Sandals more interwoven and complete
 To fit the naked foot of poesy;
 Let us inspect the lyre, and weigh the stress
 Of every chord, and see what may be gained
 By ear industrious, and attention meet;
 Misers of sound and syllable, no less
 Than Midas of his coinage, let us be
 Jealous of dead leaves in the bay wreath crown;
 So, if we may not let the Muse be free,
 She will be bound with garlands of her own.



La Belle Dame Sans Merci

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
 Alone and palely loitering?
 The sedge has withered from the lake,
 And no birds sing.

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms!
 So haggard and so woebegone?
 The squirrel's granary is full,
 And the harvest's done.

I see a lily on thy brow
 With anguish moist and fever dew,
 And on thy cheek a fading rose
 Fast withereth too.

"I met a lady in the meads,
 Full beautiful -a faery's child,
 Her hair was long, her foot was light,
 And her eyes were wild.

I made a garland for her head,
 And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
 She looked at me as she did love,
 And made sweet moan.

I set her on my pacing steed,
 And nothing else saw all day long,
 For sidelong would she bend, and sing
 A faery's song.

She found me roots of relish sweet,
 And honey wild, and manna dew,
 And sure in language strange she said
 'I love thee true.'

She took me to her elfin grot,
 And there she wept, and sighed full sore,
 And there I shut her wild wild eyes
 With kisses four.

And there she lulled me asleep,
 And there I dreamed -Ah! woe betide!
 The latest dream I ever dreamed
 On the cold hill's side.

I saw pale kings and princes too,
 Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
 They cried -'La Belle Dame sans Merci
 Hath thee in thrall!'



I saw their starved lips in the gloam,
 With horrid warning gaped wide,
 And I awoke and found me here,
 On the cold hill's side.

And this is why I sojourn here,
 Alone and palely loitering,
 Though the sedge has withered from the lake,
 And no birds sing."

Lines on the Mermaid Tavern

Souls of Poets dead and gone,
 What Elysium have ye known,
 Happy field or mossy cavern,
 Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?
 Have ye tippled drink more fine
 Than mine host's Canary wine?
 Or are fruits of Paradise
 Sweeter than those dainty pies
 Of venison? O generous food!
 Drest as though bold Robin Hood
 Would, with his Maid Marian,
 Sup and bowse from horn and can.

I have heard that on a day
 Mine host's sign-board flew away;
 Nobody knew whither, till
 An astrologer's old quill
 To a sheepskin gave the story -
 Said he saw you in your glory,
 Underneath a new old sign,
 Sipping beverage divine,
 And pledging with contented smack
 The Mermaid in the Zodiac.



Souls of Poets dead and gone,
 What Elysium have ye known,
 Happy field or mossy cavern,
 Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?

O Solitude! If I Must With Thee Dwell

O Solitude! if I must with thee dwell,
 Let it not be among the jumbled heap
 Of murky buildings: climb with me the steep, -
 Nature's observatory -whence the dell,
 In flowery slopes, its river's crystal swell,
 May seem a span; let me thy vigils keep
 'Mongst boughs pavilioned, where the deer's swift leap
 Startles the wild bee from the foxglove bell.
 But though I'll gladly trace these scenes with thee,
 Yet the sweet converse of an innocent mind,
 Whose words are images of thoughts refined,
 Is my soul's pleasure; and it sure must be
 Almost the highest bliss of human-kind,
 When to thy haunts two kindred spirits flee.

*Ode on a Grecian Urn*

Thou still unravished bride of quietness!
 Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
 Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
 A flow'ry tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
 What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape
 Of deities or mortals, or of both,
 In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
 What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
 What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
 What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
 Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
 Not to the sensual ear, but, more endeared,
 Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
 Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
 Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
 Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
 Though winning near the goal -yet, do not grieve;
 She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
 For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
 Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;

And, happy melodist, unwearied,
 For ever piping songs for ever new;
 More happy love! more happy, happy love!
 For ever warm and still to be enjoyed,
 For ever panting and for ever young;
 All breathing human passion far above,
 That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloyed,
 A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
 To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
 Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
 And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
 What little town by river or sea-shore,
 Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
 Is emptied of its folk, this pious morn?
 And, little town, thy streets for evermore
 Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
 Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
 Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
 With forest branches and the trodden weed;
 Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
 As doth eternity: Cold pastoral!
 When old age shall this generation waste,



Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
 Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou sayst,
 "Beauty is truth, truth beauty, -that is all
 Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

Ode on Melancholy

No, no, go not to Lethe, neither twist
 Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine;
 Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kissed
 By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine;
 Make not your rosary of yew-berries,
 Nor let the beetle nor the death-moth be
 Your mournful Psyche, nor the downy owl
 A partner in your sorrow's mysteries;
 For shade to shade will come too drowsily,
 And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul.

But when the melancholy fit shall fall
 Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,
 That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,
 And hides the green hill in an April shroud;
 Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
 Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,
 Or on the wealth of globed peonies;
 Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
 Imprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
 And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.

She dwells with Beauty -Beauty that must die;
 And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips



Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,
 Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips:
 Ay, in the very temple of Delight
 Veiled Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
 Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
 Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine:
 His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
 And be among her cloudy trophies hung.

Ode to a Nightingale

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
 My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
 Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
 One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
 'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
 But being too happy in thy happiness, -
 That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,
 In some melodious plot
 Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
 Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

O for a draught of vintage! that hath been
 Cooled a long age in the deep-delved earth,
 Tasting of Flora and the country-green,
 Dance, and Provencal song, and sunburnt mirth.
 O for a beaker full of the warm South,
 Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
 With beaded bubbles winking at the brim
 And purple-stained mouth;
 That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
 And with thee fade away into the forest dim.

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
 What thou among the leaves hast never known,



The weariness, the fever, and the fret
 Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
 Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,
 Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
 Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
 And leaden-eyed despairs;
 Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
 Or new Love pine at them beyond tomorrow.

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
 Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
 But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
 Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
 Already with thee! tender is the night,
 And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
 Clustered around by all her starry Fays;
 But here there is no light
 Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
 Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
 Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
 But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
 Wherewith the seasonable month endows
 The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
 White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;

Fast-fading violets covered up in leaves;
 And mid-May's eldest child
 The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
 The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Darkling I listen; and for many a time
 I have been half in love with easeful Death,
 Called him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
 To take into the air my quiet breath;
 Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
 To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
 While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
 In such an ecstasy!
 Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain -
 To thy high requiem become a sod.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
 No hungry generations tread thee down;
 The voice I hear this passing night was heard
 In ancient days by emperor and clown:
 Perhaps the selfsame song that found a path
 Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
 She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
 The same that oft-times hath
 Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
 Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.



Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
 To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
 Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
 As she is fabled to do, deceiving elf.
 Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
 Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
 Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
 In the next valley-glades:
 Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
 Fled is that music: -do I wake or sleep?

Ode to Autumn

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness!
 Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
 Conspiring with him how to load and bless
 With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
 To bend with apples the mossed cottage-trees,
 And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
 To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
 With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
 And still more, later flowers for the bees,
 Until they think warm days will never cease,
 For Summer has o'erbrimmed their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
 Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
 Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
 Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
 Or on a half-reaped furrow sound asleep,
 Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
 Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers;
 And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
 Steady thy laden head across a brook;
 Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
 Thou watchest the last ooziings, hours by hours.



Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
 Think not of them, thou hast thy music too, -
 While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day
 And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
 Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
 Among the river shallows, borne aloft
 Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
 And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
 Hedge-crickets sing, and now with treble soft
 The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft;
 And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

Ode to Psyche

O Goddess! hear these tuneless numbers, wrung
 By sweet enforcement and remembrance dear,
 And pardon that thy secrets should be sung
 Even into thine own soft-conched ear:
 Surely I dreamt today, or did I see
 The winged Psyche with awakened eyes?
 I wandered in a forest thoughtlessly,
 And, on the sudden, fainting with surprise,
 Saw two fair creatures, couched side by side
 In deepest grass, beneath the whisp'ring roof
 Of leaves and trembled blossoms, where there ran
 A brooklet, scarce espied:

'Mid hushed, cool-rooted flowers, fragrant-eyed,
 Blue, silver-white, and budded Tyrian,
 They lay calm-breathing on the bedded grass;
 Their arms embraced, and their pinions too;
 Their lips touched not, but had not bade adieu,
 As if disjoined by soft-handed slumber,
 And ready still past kisses to outnumber
 At tender eye-dawn of aureorean love:
 The winged boy I knew;
 But who wast thou, O happy, happy dove?
 His Psyche true!



O latest born and loveliest vision far
 Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy!
 Fairer than Phoebe's sapphire-regioned star,
 Or Vesper, amorous glow-worm of the sky;
 Fairer than these, though temple thou hast none,
 Nor altar heaped with flowers;
 Nor virgin-choir to make delicious moan
 Upon the midnight hours;
 No voice, no lute, no pipe, no incense sweet
 From chain-swung censer teeming;
 No shrine, no grove, no oracle, no heat
 Of pale-mouthed prophet dreaming.

O brightest! though too late for antique vows,
 Too, too late for the fond believing lyre,
 When holy were the haunted forest boughs,
 Holy the air, the water, and the fire;
 Yet even in these days so far retired
 From happy pieties, thy lucent fans,
 Fluttering among the faint Olympians,
 I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspired.
 So let me be thy choir, and make a moan
 Upon the midnight hours;
 Thy voice, thy lute, thy pipe, thy incense sweet
 From swung censer teeming;

Thy shrine, thy grove, thy oracle, thy heat
Of pale-mouthed prophet dreaming.

Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane
In some untrodden region of my mind,
Where branched thoughts, new grown with pleasant pain,
Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind:
Far, far around shall those dark-clustered trees
Fledge the wild-ridged mountains steep by steep;
And there by zephyrs, streams, and birds, and bees,
The moss-lain dryads shall be lulled to sleep;
And in the midst of this wide quietness
A rosy sanctuary will I dress
With the wreathed trellis of a working brain,
With buds, and bells, and stars without a name,
With all the gardener Fancy e'er could feign,
Who breeding flowers, will never breed the same:
And there shall be for thee all soft delight
That shadowy thought can win,
A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,
To let the warm Love in!



On Fame

“You cannot eat your cake and have it too.” -Proverb

How fevered is the man who cannot look
Upon his mortal days with temperate blood,
Who vexes all the leaves of his life's book,
And robs his fair name of its maidenhood;
It is as if the rose should pluck herself,
Or the ripe plum finger its misty bloom,
As if a Naiad, like a meddling elf,
Should darken her pure grot with muddy gloom;
But the rose leaves herself upon the briar,
For winds to kiss and grateful bees to feed,
And the ripe plum still wears its dim attire;
The undisturbed lake has crystal space;
Why then should man, teasing the world for grace,
Spoil his salvation for a fierce miscreed?

On First Looking into Chapman's Homer

Much have I travelled in the realms of gold,
 And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
 Round many western islands have I been
 Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
 Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
 That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne;
 Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
 Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
 Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
 When a new planet swims into his ken;
 Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
 He stared at the Pacific -and all his men
 Looked at each other with a wild surmise -
 Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

*On Leaving Some Friends at an Early Hour*

Give me a golden pen, and let me lean
 On heaped-up flowers, in regions clear, and far;
 Bring me a tablet whiter than a star,
 Or hand of hymning angel, when 'tis seen
 The silver strings of heavenly harp atween:
 And let there glide by many a pearly car
 Pink robes, and wavy hair, and diamond jar,
 And half-discovered wings, and glances keen.
 The while let music wander round my ears,
 And as it reaches each delicious ending,
 Let me write down a line of glorious tone,
 And full of many wonders of the spheres:
 For what a height my spirit is contending!
 'Tis not content so soon to be alone.

On Seeing the Elgin Marbles for the First Time

My spirit is too weak; mortality
 Weighs heavily on me like unwilling sleep,
 And each imagined pinnacle and steep
 Of godlike hardship tells me I must die
 Like a sick eagle looking at the sky.
 Yet 'tis a gentle luxury to weep,
 That I have not the cloudy winds to keep
 Fresh for the opening of the morning's eye.
 Such dim-conceived glories of the brain
 Bring round the heart an indescribable feud;
 So do these wonders a most dizzy pain,
 That mingles Grecian grandeur with the rude
 Wasting of old Time -with a billowy main,
 A sun, a shadow of a magnitude.



On the Sea

It keeps eternal whisperings around
 Desolate shores, and with its mighty swell
 Gluts twice ten thousand caverns, till the spell
 Of Hecate leaves them their old shadowy sound.
 Often 'tis in such gentle temper found,
 That scarcely will the very smallest shell
 Be moved for days from whence it sometime fell,
 When last the winds of heaven were unbound.
 Oh ye! who have your eye-balls vexed and tired,
 Feast them upon the wideness of the Sea;
 Oh ye! whose ears are dinned with uproar rude,
 Or fed too much with cloying melody, -
 Sit ye near some old cavern's mouth, and brood
 Until ye start, as if the sea-nymphs choired!

The Day is Gone, and all its Sweets are Gone

Sweet voice, sweet lips, soft hand, and softer breast,
 Warm breath, light whisper, tender semitone,
 Bright eyes, accomplished shape, and lang'rous waist!
 Faded the flower and all its budded charms,
 Faded the sight of beauty from my eyes,
 Faded the shape of beauty from my arms,
 Faded the voice, warmth, whiteness, paradise -
 Vanished unseasonably at shut of eve,
 When the dusk holiday -or holineight
 Of fragrant-curtained love begins to weave
 The woof of darkness thick, for hid delight;
 But, as I've read love's missal through today,
 He'll let me sleep, seeing I fast and pray.

*The Human Seasons*

Four seasons fill the measure of the year;
 There are four seasons in the mind of Man:
 He has his lusty Spring, when fancy clear
 Takes in all beauty with an easy span:
 He has his Summer, when luxuriously
 Spring's honeyed cud of youthful thought he loves
 To ruminare, and by such dreaming high
 Is nearest unto heaven: quiet coves
 His soul has in its Autumn, when his wings
 He furlleth close; contented so to look
 On mists in idleness -to let fair things
 Pass by unheeded as a threshold brook: -
 He has his Winter too of pale misfeature,
 Or else he would forgo his mortal nature.

To

Had I a man's fair form, then might my sighs
 Be echoed swiftly through that ivory shell,
 Thine ear, and find thy gentle heart; so well
 Would passion arm me for the enterprise:
 But ah! I am no knight whose foeman dies;
 No cuirass glistens on my bosom's swell;
 I am no happy shepherd of the dell
 Whose lips have trembled with a maiden's eyes.
 Yet must I dote upon thee, -call thee sweet,
 Sweeter by far than Hybla's honied roses
 When steeped in dew rich to intoxication.
 Ah! I will taste that dew, for me 'tis meet,
 And when the moon her pallid face discloses,
 I'll gather some by spells, and incantation.

*To a Friend Who Sent Me Some Roses*

As late I rambled in the happy fields,
 What time the skylark shakes the tremulous dew
 From his lush clover covert; -when anew
 Adventurous knights take up their dinted shields;
 I saw the sweetest flower wild nature yields,
 A fresh-blown musk-rose; 'twas the first that threw
 Its sweets upon the summer: graceful it grew
 As is the wand that Queen Titania wields.
 And, as I feasted on its fragrancy,
 I thought the garden-rose it far excelled;
 But when, O Wells! thy roses came to me,
 My sense with their deliciousness was spelled:
 Soft voices had they, that with tender plea
 Whispered of peace, and truth, and friendliness unquelled.

To a Young Lady Who Sent Me a Laurel Crown

Fresh morning gusts have blown away all fear
 From my glad bosom, -now from gloominess
 I mount for ever -not an atom less
 Than the proud laurel shall content my bier.
 No! by the eternal stars! or why sit here
 In the Sun's eye, and 'gainst my temples press
 Apollo's very leaves, woven to bless
 By thy white fingers and thy spirit clear.
 Lo! who dares say, "Do this"? Who dares call down
 My will from its high purpose? Who say,"Stand,"
 Or, "Go"? This mighty moment I would frown
 On abject Caesars -not the stoutest band
 Of mailed heroes should tear off my crown:
 Yet would I kneel and kiss thy gentle hand.

*To Ailsa Rock*

Hearken, thou craggy ocean-pyramid,
 Give answer by thy voice -the sea-fowls' screams!
 When were thy shoulders mantled in huge streams?
 When from the sun was thy broad forehead hid?
 How long is't since the mighty Power bid
 Thee heave to airy sleep from fathom dreams -
 Sleep in the lap of thunder or sunbeams -
 Or when grey clouds are thy cold coverlid!
 Thou answer'st not; for thou art dead asleep.
 Thy life is but two dead eternities,
 The last in air, the former in the deep!
 First with the whales, last with the eagle-skies!
 Drowned wast thou till an earthquake made thee steep,
 Another cannot wake thy giant-size!

To Autumn

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
 Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
 Conspiring with him how to load and bless
 With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
 To bend with apples the moss'd cottage trees,
 And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
 To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
 With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
 And still more, later flowers for the bees,
 Until they think warm days will never cease,
 For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
 Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
 Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
 Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
 Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
 Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
 Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers;
 And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
 Steady thy laden head across a brook;
 Or, by a cyder-press, with patient look,
 Thou watchest the last oozy hours by hours.



Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
 Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,-
 While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
 And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
 Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
 Among the river shallows, borne aloft
 Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
 And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
 Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
 The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
 And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

To Fanny

I cry your mercy -pity -love! -aye, love!
 Merciful love that tantalizes not,
 One-thoughted, never-wandering, guileless love,
 Unmasked, and being seen -without a blot!
 O! let me have thee whole, -all -all -be mine!
 That shape, that fairness, that sweet minor zest
 Of love, your kiss, -those hands, those eyes divine,
 That warm, white, lucent, million-pleasured breast, -
 Yourself -your soul -in pity give me all,
 Withhold no atom's atom or I die,
 Or living on, perhaps, your wretched thrall,
 Forget, in the mist of idle misery,
 Life's purposes, -the palate of my mind
 Losing its gust, and my ambition blind!

*To G.A.W.*

Nymph of the downward smile and sidelong glance!
 In what diviner moments of the day
 Art thou most lovely? -when gone far astray
 Into the labyrinths of sweet utterance,
 Or when serenely wandering in a trance
 Of sober thought? Or when starting away,
 With careless robe to meet the morning ray,
 Thou sparest the flowers in thy mazy dance?
 Haply 'tis when thy ruby lips part sweetly,
 And so remain, because thou listenest:
 But thou to please wert nurtured so completely
 That I can never tell what mood is best;
 I shall as soon pronounce which Grace more neatly
 Trips it before Apollo than the rest.

To Haydon

Haydon! forgive me that I cannot speak
 Definitively of these mighty things;
 Forgive me, that I have not eagle's wings,
 That what I want I know not where to seek,
 And think that I would not be over-meek,
 In rolling out upfollowed thunderings,
 Even to the steep of Heliconian springs,
 Were I of ample strength for such a freak.
 Think, too, that all these numbers should be thine;
 Whose else? In this who touch thy vesture's hem?
 For, when men stared at what was most divine
 With brainless idiotism and o'erwise phlegm,
 Thou hadst beheld the full Hesperian shine
 Of their star in the east, and gone to worship them!

*To Homer*

Standing aloof in giant ignorance,
 Of thee I hear and of the Cyclades,
 As one who sits ashore and longs perchance
 To visit dolphin-coral in deep seas.
 So thou wast blind! -but then the veil was rent;
 For Jove uncurtained Heaven to let thee live,
 And Neptune made for thee a spumy tent,
 And Pan made sing for thee his forest-hive;
 Aye, on the shores of darkness there is light,
 And precipices show untrodden green;
 There is a budding morrow in midnight;
 There is a triple sight in blindness keen;
 Such seeing hadst thou, as it once befell
 To Dian, Queen of Earth, and Heaven, and Hell.

To John Hamilton Reynolds

O that a week could be an age, and we
 Felt parting and warm meeting every week,
 Then one poor year a thousand years would be,
 The flush of welcome ever on the cheek:
 So could we live long life in little space,
 So time itself would be annihilate,
 So a day's journey in oblivious haze
 To serve ourjoys would lengthen and dilate.
 O to arrive each Monday morn from Ind!
 To land each Tuesday from the rich Levant!
 In little time a host of joys to bind,
 And keep our souls in one eternal pant!
 This morn, my friend, and yester-evening taught
 Me how to harbour such a happy thought.

*To My Brother George*

Many the wonders I this day have seen:
 The sun, when first he kissed away the tears
 That filled the eyes of Morn; -the laurelled peers
 Who from the feathery gold of evening lean; -
 The ocean with its vastness, its blue green,
 Its ships, its rocks, its caves, its hopes, its fears,
 Its voice mysterious, which whoso hears
 Must think on what will be, and what has been.
 E'en now, dear George, while this for you I write,
 Cynthia is from her silken curtains peeping
 So scanty, that it seems her bridal night,
 And she her half-discovered revels keeping.
 But what, without the social thought of thee,
 Would be the wonders of the sky and sea?

To My Brothers

Small, busy flames play through the fresh-laid coals,
 And their faint cracklings o'er our silence creep
 Like whispers of the household gods that keep
 A gentle empire o'er fraternal souls.
 And while for rhymes I search around the poles,
 Your eyes are fixed, as in poetic sleep,
 Upon the lore so voluble and deep,
 That aye at fall of night our care concedes.
 This is your birthday, Tom, and I rejoice
 That thus it passes smoothly, quietly:
 Many such eves of gently whispering noise
 May we together pass, and calmly try
 What are this world's true joys, -ere the great Voice
 From its fair face shall bid our spirits fly.

*To One Who Has Been Long in City Pent*

To one who has been long in city pent
 'Tis very sweet to look into the fair
 And open face of heaven, -to breathe a prayer
 Full in the smile of the blue firmament.
 Who is more happy, when, with heart's content,
 Fatigued he sinks into some pleasant lair
 Of wavy grass, and reads a debonair
 And gentle tale of love and languishment?
 Returning home at evening, with an ear
 Catching the notes of Philomel, -an eye
 Watching the sailing cloudlet's bright career,
 He mourns that day so soon has glided by,
 E'en like the passage of an angel's tear
 That falls through the clear ether silently.

To Sleep

O soft embalmer of the still midnight!
 Shutting, with careful fingers and benign,
 Our gloom-pleas'd eyes, embowered from the light,
 Enshaded in forgetfulness divine;
 O soothest Sleep! if so it please thee, close,
 In midst of this thine hymn, my willing eyes,
 Or wait the amen, ere thy poppy throws
 Around my bed its lulling charities;
 Then save me, or the passed day will shine
 Upon my pillow, breeding many woes;
 Save me from curious conscience, that still lords
 Its strength, for darkness burrowing like a mole;
 Turn the key deftly in the oiled wards,
 And seal the hushed casket of my soul.

*To the Nile*

Son of the old Moon-mountains African!
 Chief of the Pyramid and Crocodile!
 We call thee fruitful, and that very while
 A desert fills our seeing's inward span:
 Nurse of swart nations since the world began,
 Art thou so fruitful? or dost thou beguile
 Such men to honour thee, who, worn with toil,
 Rest for a space 'twixt Cairo and Decan?
 O may dark fancies err! They surely do;
 'Tis ignorance that makes a barren waste
 Of all beyond itself. Thou dost bedew
 Green rushes like our rivers, and dost taste
 The pleasant sunrise. Green isles hast thou too,
 And to the sea as happily dost haste.

When I Have Fears That I May Cease to Be

When I have fears that I may cease to be
 Before my pen has gleaned my teeming brain,
 Before high-piled books, in charact'ry,
 Hold like rich garnerers the full-ripened grain;
 When I behold upon the night's starred face
 Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
 And think that I may never live to trace
 Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;
 And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,
 That I shall never look upon thee more,
 Never have relish in the faery power
 Of unreflecting love! -then on the shore
 Of the wide world I stand alone, and think,
 Till Love and Fame to nothingness do sink.

*Why Did I Laugh Tonight? No Voice Will Tell*

Why did I laugh tonight? No voice will tell:
 No God, no Demon of severe response,
 Deigns to reply from Heaven or from Hell.
 Then to my human heart I turn at once.
 Heart! Thou and I are here, sad and alone;
 I say, why did I laugh? O mortal pain!
 O Darkness! Darkness! ever must I moan,
 To question Heaven and Hell and Heart in vain.
 Why did I laugh? I know this Being's lease,
 My fancy to its utmost blisses spreads;
 Yet would I on this very midnight cease,
 And the world's gaudy ensigns see in shreds;
 Verse, Fame, and Beauty are intense indeed,
 But Death intenser -Death is Life's high meed.

Written Before Re-Reading King Lear

O golden-tongued Romance with serene lute!
 Fair plumed Syren! Queen of far away!
 Leave melodizing on this wintry day,
 Shut up thine olden pages, and be mute.
 Adieu! for once again the fierce dispute
 Betwixt damnation and impassioned clay
 Must I burn through; once more humbly assay
 The bitter-sweet of this Shakespearian fruit.
 Chief Poet! and ye clouds of Albion,
 Begetters of our deep eternal theme,
 When through the old oak Forest I am gone,
 Let me not wander in a barren dream,
 But when I am consumed in the Fire,
 Give me new Phoenix wings to fly at my desire.

*Written on a Blank Space*

This pleasant tale is like a little copse:
 The honied lines so freshly interlace,
 To keep the reader in so sweet a place,
 So that he here and there full-hearted stops;
 And oftentimes he feels the dewy drops
 Come cool and suddenly against his face,
 And, by the wandering melody, may trace
 Which way the tender-legged linnet hops.
 Oh! what a power has white Simplicity!
 What mighty power has this gentle story!
 I, that do ever feel athirst for glory,
 Could at this moment be content to lie
 Meekly upon the grass, as those whose sobbings
 Were heard of none beside the mournful robins.

Written on a Summer Evening

The church bells toll a melancholy round,
 Calling the people to some other prayers,
 Some other gloominess, more dreadful cares,
 More harkening to the sermon's horrid sound.
 Surely the mind of man is closely bound
 In some blind spell: seeing that each one tears
 Himself from fireside joys and Lydian airs,
 And converse high of those with glory crowned.
 Still, still they toll, and I should feel a damp,
 A chill as from a tomb, did I not know
 That they are dying like an outburnt lamp, -
 That 'tis their sighing, wailing, ere they go
 Into oblivion -that fresh flowers will grow,
 And many glories of immortal stamp.

*Written on the Day that Mr Leigh Hunt
Left Prison*

What though, for showing truth to flattered state,
 Kind Hunt was shut in prison, yet has he,
 In his immortal spirit, been as free
 As the sky-searching lark, and as elate.
 Minion of grandeur! think you he did wait?
 Think you he nought but prison-walls did see,
 Till, so unwilling, thou unturnedst the key?
 Ah, no! far happier, nobler was his fate!
 In Spenser's halls he strayed, and bowers fair,
 Culling enchanted flowers; and he flew
 With daring Milton through the fields of air:
 To regions of his own his genius true
 Took happy flights. Who shall his fame impair
 When thou art dead, and all thy wretched crew?











































































